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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TAIWAN'S WHO BID, U.S.-ROK FREE TRADE
AGREEMENT, CHINA-JAPAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage April 13 on the human trafficking problem in Taiwan, on the Taipei prosecutors' raid of a local major mobile phone manufacturing company Thursday for alleged insider trading of company shares; on Taiwan's attempt to join the World Health Organization (WHO) as a full member under the name of "Taiwan;" on the 2008 presidential elections; and on an accident that happened at the Kaohsiung Zoo Wednesday evening. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" front-paged a news story on Taiwan's human trafficking problem, in which a sub-headline said "U.S. Department of Justice Recognizes Positively Taiwan's Combating of Human Trafficking." The pro-status quo "China Times" also featured on page five a speech by U.S. Deputy Assistant Attorney General Grace Chung Becker at a Human Trafficking International Conference in Taipei Thursday; the banner headline of the article read "Taiwan Is Listed in the Tier 2 Watch List by the United States Because of Its Serious Human Trafficking Problem; Traffickers Have Lowered [the International Position of] Taiwan."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "China Times" analysis commented on the island's WHO bid under the name of "Taiwan" and said it was a political move aimed at the upcoming elections. An analysis in the "United Daily News" also chimed in, saying Taiwan might lose more than what it intends to gain by its attempt to highlight Taiwan's sovereignty. An op-ed piece in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed the U.S.-ROK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and said the United States should consider prudently the impact such an agreement may have on Taiwan and should sign an FTA with Taiwan as well. Regarding Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Japan, a "Liberty Times" editorial said Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's reiteration of Tokyo's position of not supporting Taiwan independence indicated the Japanese government's current policy and its attitude of not interfering with Taiwan's internal affairs. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" said little substance emerged from the apparent thaw in China-Japan relations, "because speeches and diplomatic posturing alone cannot solve the disputes between the two regional powerhouses." End summary.

¶3. Taiwan's WHO Bid

A) "[With] Cross-Strait Tension Rising, All Taiwan People [Are Forced to] Join Bian in the Game of Campaigning"

Journalist Lin Shu-ling wrote in an analysis in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (4/13):

"Taiwan has failed for ten consecutive years in its attempt to become an observer at the World Health Assembly. The government then changed its strategy and resorted to a more difficult approach by seeking to enter the World Health Organization under the name of 'Taiwan.' Its intent to [boost] campaigning is self-evident. But excessive political manipulation may very likely turn the efforts of

many of its predecessors into nothing. It is very obvious that the Bian administration's move to toss off this topic prior to the elections is aimed at using it as a tool in combination with other topics such as the name change and referendum bundled with the elections so as to boost its campaigning. ...

"In particular, major changes have occurred to the situation between the United States and Asia. Taiwan failed in its ambitious attempt to sign a free trade agreement (FTA) with the United States, while the U.S.-ROK Free Trade Agreement is smooth on the wing. Following Wen Jiabao's state visit to Japan, tension between the two countries will be gradually mitigated. The United States does not want to get itself involved in or create new international disputes in the year when its campaigning is about to begin. All these developments will put the Bian administration's fixed plan to 'join hands with Washington and Tokyo to confront Beijing' in a very unfavorable position."

B) "To Carry out Bian's Promise, [Taiwan] Upgrades the Level of [Its WHO] Bid; Watch out That Haste May Make Waste"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang noted in an analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (4/13):

"... In fact, even though Taiwan regards the United States' support for Taiwan to become an observer at the World Health Assembly as a major diplomatic victory, there is a proviso. Washington has long since indicated that it does not support Taiwan to become a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) because the United States has a clear policy which says it does not support Taiwan to join any international organizations for which the statehood is a requirement. The Taiwan government is clearly aware of the U.S. position and the fact that this task cannot possibly be achieved. But in order to cash the oral check made by Chen Shui-bian whose remainder has only one year, Taiwan still hands out such a new application for the membership.
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"Sources said the Chen Shui-bian administration has informed the U.S. government in advance of its WHO bid via Taipei and Washington, respectively, and the U.S. government did not wait very long to reply to Taiwan in a tough manner that it does not support [such a move]! Even though the U.S. State Department reiterated that its position in support of Taiwan's bid to gain observer status in the WHO remains unchanged, Taiwan's change of plans to seek membership rather than observer status is akin to destroying the United States' and Japan's preconditions for supporting Taiwan's WHO bid. ... It is natural that Taiwan will not obtain the U.S. and Japan's support for its WHO bid, but the worst scenario could be that Taiwan will lose more than it gains for its move to 'highlight Taiwan's sovereignty' if what it gets in return is the opposition of countries such as the United States and Japan which uphold the 'one China' policy."

4. U.S.-ROK Free Trade Agreement

"U.S.-ROK FTA Generates Impact on Taiwan's Trade and Economics"

Chao Wen-heng, associate research fellow at the Taiwan Institute for Economic Research, opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (4/13):

"... But it is a great misfortune that any free trade agreements (FTA) signed between Japan, China and South Korea will affect Taiwan's most sensitive nerve in terms of its external trade relations. If the three countries all succeed in signing an FTA with each other or even with the United States, Taiwan will be severely marginalized. Even though Japan and China will suffer damage because of the U.S.-ROK FTA, they can be compensated by signing an FTA with South Korea or the United States. Given the situation that Taiwan is unable to sign an FTA [with any of these countries], the island will become the biggest victim of the U.S.-ROK FTA, whose impact and follow-on influence will be a severe test for Taiwan in its history of external trade. When thinking of this, we cannot help but ask this question: Has the United States, while seeking proactively to sign an FTA with South Korea, ever considered the damage such an agreement will have on Taiwan? Taiwan

is a loyal ally of the United States. The United States should consider prudently the impact the U.S.-ROK FTA will generate on Taiwan and treat the island more fairly by signing an FTA with Taiwan."

15. China-Japan Relations

A) "Chinese Leaders Should Read the 'San Francisco Peace Treaty' More Often"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] editorialized (4/13):

"... Just as the governments of other countries have done, [Japanese] Prime Minister Shinzo Abe reiterated to Wen Jiabao that [Tokyo] 'does not support Taiwan independence.' This statement has indicated the Japanese government's current policy and its attitude of not interfering with Taiwan's internal affairs, because it is up to the 23 million people in Taiwan to decide if Taiwan wants to become a normal country. Abe's position also served as a foil to show that the so-called 'opposition to Taiwan independence' is nothing but a move to intervene in Taiwan's internal affairs, a move that has severely violated international laws and the UN charter. This is the basic reason why the Beijing authorities only got an answer of 'no support for Taiwan independence' when they requested the U.S. government [say that it] 'opposes Taiwan independence.' ..."

B) "Same old Tune, Still Off-key"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (4/13):

"Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's trip to Japan and his landmark speech to the Diet yesterday offered a tantalizing glimpse of what smooth relations between Beijing and Tokyo might look like. Unfortunately, beyond the glib speeches and photo-op smiles, little of substance emerged. This is because speeches and diplomatic posturing alone cannot solve the disputes between the two regional powerhouses over attitudes toward Japan's invasion of China in the 1930s, Beijing's increasing military buildup and concerns about how to utilize energy resources in the East China Sea. ...

"'We will strive with all our might to achieve peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue, but we will never tolerate Taiwan independence,' Wen said. 'We hope that Japan can understand the highly sensitive nature of the Taiwan issue, abide by its pledges and handle the issue prudently.' Yes, Mr. Premier, we in Taiwan
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also hope that the issue is handled prudently. By Beijing. We hope that everyone can understand the 'highly sensitive nature' of the issue. But we also hope that China does not keep its promises, which have ranged from using nuclear weapons against US cities to thwart intervention, to invading this peaceful, prosperous nation by the year 2020. So enjoy your trip to Tokyo, Mr. Wen. Do all you can to nullify the animosity that exists between some parts of your government and some in Japan's. But you'll have to excuse us if we struggle not to roll our eyes at your promises of friendship, peace and happiness. We've heard it all before."

YOUNG